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MAJOR FACTORS AFFECTING THE ASSIMILATION OF THE OVERSEAS CHINESE IN THAILAND

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INTRODUCTION

The overseas Chinese have always played an extremely important role in the life and society of the nations of Southeast Asia, yet, for the most part, historians have paid them little attention. Perhaps one of the reasons is the difficulty in obtaining agreement as to who or what constitutes membership in this special group. No definition can be sharp and clear for it must, of necessity, vary with the time frame studied, the place in which the study is conducted, the discipline undertaking the research,

and the mental set conditioning the research, and the mental set conditioning the researcher. Apparently, overseas Chinese, from the point of view of the object, are those who think they are. Several attributes, however, seem necessary. Primarily, one must have some degree of Chinese ancestry, at least on the paternal side, although birth in China is not an absolute requirement. A second prerequisite is residence in another nation, at least for a reasonably extended period. This residence must be voluntary and at the option of the individual or his forebears and must

have resulted from a quest for the "better life" which was not available in his own country. A final requirement appears to be at least a vague emotional link with the motherland and its culture.¹

This effort will concern itself with the overseas Chinese in Thailand, a nation of great importance to the American effort to contain communism. It will treat the major factors affecting the assimilation or acculturation of this group, for the degree to which the overseas Chinese are merged within a given society will determine the extent of centrifugal or centripetal forces acting upon that society and therefore its stability.

There are some who hold, as a distinguished political scientist revealed during a lecture at the U.S. Naval War College on 4 October 1967, that the overseas Chinese are, in effect, adherents to and extensions of the Communist Party of Peking and are, as such, indeed a "Yellow Peril" forming a potential subversive group and fifth column within the nation. Others, perhaps cynically or naively, attempt to convey the impression that the overseas Chinese tend toward aloofness and non-participation, concerning themselves only with economic gain. Such a view is portrayed when the exponent, thinking out loud for the Chinese, says, "We don't mind who holds the head of the cow, provided we can milk it."² Both of these views are exaggerations, the former frightening, and both are patently inaccurate.³ It is important, then, for thoughtful individuals to concern themselves with the problem and its historical evolution and convolutions.

For the purposes of this paper the nation treated will be called Thailand throughout, even though that name was substituted for Siam only in 1950.

Certain circumstances make the case for assimilation of the Chinese in Thailand extremely unique. The country was never colonized by the Western World

and so the Thai rather than the colonial people represented the local elite. Upward social mobility, then, required the Chinese to move toward the Thai and thus assimilation. In the other nations of Southeast Asia, the Spanish, Dutch, French, British, and Americans became an artificial, colonial elite superimposed upon the indigenous population. To move upward, the Chinese moved toward this colonial group and away from the native populace and thus away from assimilation.⁴

In addition, the general features of the Chinese and Thai are much more alike than anywhere else in Southeast Asia, which tends to make assimilation physically easier. To the Thai, racial differences have relatively little importance, which results in race not being counted as a determinant of behavior, nor are particular physical traits or marks considered signs of superiority or inferiority. As a result, little mitigates against mobility between and among various ethnic groups; on the contrary, assimilation is both possible and is encouraged by the Thai people.⁵

Two other factors must be considered before we embark upon our historical development. The overseas Chinese possess both liabilities and assets as a people. In the first category we discover a reluctance to develop roots in the soil of his newly adopted land. He has come here in search of his fortune with ultimate return to China as his goal. He did not intend to be absorbed into the new nation and thus tended to insulate himself from the local community which often caused resentment and the erection of barriers against him, especially after he became successful.⁶ These liabilities mitigate against assimilation so long as the Chinese maintain a view of separateness and a mental set oriented toward China. The antagonism of the indigenous people, if allowed to remain, will tend toward the same direction.

The other side of the coin reveals

assets which may or may not tend towards the reverse. In literacy and education the Chinese are generally superior to their fellow local citizens. Many attend secondary school, and a significant number enter the university. The Chinese are the most energetic and industrious people in Southeast Asia. This application has often been described as flowing from a thought of eventual retirement and return to the motherland. Others stress the impact of cyclical, seasonal conditions prevalent in China. Heredity is also considered a factor, but this is really pure conjecture.⁷ Oriented properly, literacy and education, as well as energy and industry, can be prime movers toward a loyalty to the adopted country and eventual assimilation. This is especially true if an enlightened Thai community is willing to accept meaningful contributions from the Chinese and, in consort with that group, work for a better and united nation.

I—EARLY HISTORY

The entire 700 years of Thailand's written history reveals that the Chinese have been firmly entwined with both the life and trade of the nation.¹ In the very beginning a few hardy souls entered the country by sea and settled along the more populous coast, but by 1965 their number had soared to 2,600,000 or 8.5 percent of the total population of Thailand. This group represents the third largest Chinese population in Southeast Asia.² In addition, they live more widely scattered throughout the country than in any other nation of the area except Indonesia. They constitute 31 percent of the population of the capital, Bangkok; each town of any size has a large Chinese colony; and almost every village has a few resident families.³

The original impetus for mass migration was provided by several fortuitous circumstances. Heavy population pres-

sure, especially in Kwangtung and Fukien Provinces of South China, coupled with ruthless suppression of anarchy and disorder there in the 1850's were conducive to emigration. Drought, floods, banditry, feuds between the ruling warlords, and pestilence following on the heels of rebellion were also instrumental. Forced concessions to the West in China contributed to the exodus. At the same time a thinly populated but trade-developing Thailand had an unsatisfied demand for labor. Finally, travel had become easier, safer, and cheaper due to the introduction of the steamship.⁴ In essence, Thailand needed people, and China, with an overabundance and beset by many problems, offered no obstacles to departure, or at best only paper ones that were easily circumvented.⁵

The initial flow of immigrants, and indeed until 1906 the entire flow, was made up of male Chinese. They were welcomed and received favorable treatment by the Government for they proved themselves extremely industrious and adaptable. The absence of Chinese women coupled with Chinese racial similarity to the Thais led to interracial marriage and the eventual birth of children called *luechin*. Most of the children were brought up as Thais though some of the males continued in their fathers' culture. The weight of authority is strongly in favor of the proposition that assimilation generally took place, especially by the second and certainly by the third generation.⁶ Little friction occurred between the two peoples, and assimilation was considered so complete and successful that the royal family of Thailand was admittedly of Thai-Chinese admixture, a fact acknowledged by the kings themselves from the 18th through the 20th centuries.⁷

An additional reason offered for this striking accomplishment during the early period was not only the lack of colonization but also the opposition on

the part of the Thais to the Western Powers and their colonial policies while the Chinese were not, at that time, considered foreigners.⁸

From time to time, during this early period the Chinese Government, by imperial edict, attempted in a half-hearted manner to stem the flow of immigrants. The effort took two forms, but both were unsuccessful. Emigration from China was restricted but was effectively circumvented by bribery of officials. Repatriation from Thailand was also demanded by China, but due to a lack of treaty relations between the two countries Thailand successfully resisted compliance.⁹

As education, and its form and type, is so important to assimilation or its failure, a few words concerning this subject during this period are necessary. The first record of any school refers to two or three missionary schools established in 1837. They had a great deal of difficulty due primarily to the prejudice of both the Thai mother and the Chinese father. Prior and subsequent to this feeble effort, and indeed even during the schools' life, the bulk of education was accomplished in the home when it was undertaken at all.¹⁰

II—THE RISE OF CHINESE NATIONALISM

At the turn of the 20th century a new feeling began to manifest itself within the overseas Chinese. The process commenced with a surge of nationalism in China itself and rapidly spread throughout the Chinese people in Southeast Asia. By 1911, with the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty, a mobilized and driving force with an intense feeling of attachment to China became the faith and hope of the overseas people.¹ Though the emotion was started by events in China, it was reinforced by several factors in Thailand. For the first time Chinese women became a significant portion of the mass

movement. Chinese schools using the Chinese language were operating in Thailand. Chinese was used as the language of the home and the Chinese business community. This feeling of a separate identity within Thailand, but with loyalties to the motherland, arose in and was encouraged by the Chinese Government.²

By 1910 there was a definite recognition of separateness. In that year riots and a general strike by the Chinese protesting a capitation tax paralyzed the entire nation. Though the tax was applicable to all, the Chinese had felt it directed against them. The disorders were quickly suppressed, but the Chinese had convicted themselves of a lack of fair play and had shown the extent to which they controlled the economy. The Thais reacted with a feeling of fear and dislike which was strongly reinforced when a series of articles attributed to the reigning monarch were condensed into a pamphlet, *The Jews of the East*, in which the "Yellow Peril" was thoroughly castigated.³ By 1920 the schism was complete.

Reinforcing the separate and nationalistic feeling of the overseas Chinese was a series of lectures delivered in 1925 by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the prime mover of the Chinese Revolution of 1911 and considered the father of modern China. He spoke of race and nation as being synonymous, especially to a Chinese. Blood, he said, determined citizenship, and the Chinese were the wronged race in mortal danger of a "White Peril."⁴

The indigenous people were, at the same time, learning from the Western nations that they too had a history. The early struggle with China for independence was exhorted, and the insidious nature of the "Yellow Peril" was purveyed.⁵ The two opposing nationalistic forces grew, especially during the first half of the century, causing rivalry and antagonism between the two peoples. As a result, and for the first time, assimilation of the overseas Chi-

nese into the Thai body politic slowed and at times ground to a halt.⁶

Traditional schools in Thailand had been inadequate. Instrumental in the development of nationalism in the overseas Chinese was the introduction of the modern school system and the growing use of Mandarin Chinese within that system.⁷ Education by the Chinese in their own tongue confirmed their nationalism by affirming their singular uniqueness as the "Black-Haired Race" of the "Middle Flower Kingdom" and thereby their superiority to other races. The Chinese schools became the main community effort and the pride and hope of the fervent nationalists.⁸ As an instrument of Chinese nationalism, the school system directly isolated the overseas people from the larger community and became a great barrier to assimilation. Without the Chinese schools, nationalism would have been sterile indeed.⁹

The rise of Chinese nationalism centered in the new schools, with the concomitant isolation of their community, was not overlooked by the Thai Government. Commencing in 1930 efforts were made not only to stop but to reverse the course of events. At first the Thai he used in all afternoon classes if Chinese were used in the morning. When this failed, the Government required the bulk of education be taught in Thai, that teachers be rigorously examined in the Thai national language, and that certain textbooks be banned.¹⁰ The next step required the Chinese to have 3 years of non-Chinese secondary education if the 4 years' maximum of primary school had been completed using Chinese in the morning and Thai in the afternoon. All texts were then standardized and required approval by the Thai Educational Department prior to use. From time to time, Chinese schools were raided and required to close. A proportion of Thai teachers had to be hired. By early 1940 the use of Chinese

in the schools was on the point of disappearing, and its use elsewhere became rare.¹¹ Government policy accomplished what it had set out to do, for Chinese education was curtailed, the Chinese language inhibited, and assimilation received added impetus.¹²

A second great stimulus to nationalism and separation was the increased immigration of Chinese women. Prior to 1906 only 3 percent of the newly arriving Chinese were women, and in the very early period the entire group was masculine. Earlier, it had been too expensive for the poor immigrant to have his wife accompany him, and, in addition, he expected to return to his motherland. Finally, China had refused permission for the emigration of women because, by keeping a man's family behind, the Government could retain some degree of control over the husband and father and thereby stimulate remittance.¹³ During and after 1906 female immigration to Thailand increased rapidly and peaked at almost 32 percent in the 1930's. The result was a steady decline of racial intermarriage and the concurrent establishment of pure Chinese homes and families in an all-Chinese section which became "an unassimilated lump of aliens at the heart of the commercial life of the nation, and as the Chinese community has grown, it has shown less inclination than formerly to be absorbed into the Thai life stream."¹⁴

With the evidence plainly in view, the Thai Government reacted with immigration controls which were inadequate and poorly enforced and which took the form of alien registration rather than entry limitation.¹⁵

What the Thai Government was unable or unwilling to do, economic forces attempted. The great world depression of 1929 stifled immigration, for jobs became scarce in Thailand. In addition, China itself was hardly touched by the depression, for it was still operating, in the main, on a basic

subsistence agricultural economy.¹⁶ During the first 4 months of 1929, 12,000 Chinese departed Thailand for their ancestral home, and though the number subsequently dwindled, a greater number left Thailand during the early part of the depression than arrived.¹⁷ Compare these figures with those of new immigrants in the year 1928. In that year 150,000 new Chinese entered Thailand, which gave the indigenous people a feeling of being swamped and caused concern for the large Chinese segment which was so closely related to the national economy.¹⁸

Through the slowing of immigration and the control measures applied to the Chinese schools, nationalism tended to weaken and assimilation quicken, for the new immigrant is necessary in order to refresh the expatriate community, and education is necessary to transmit ideas.

A rapid series of revolutions and coups occurred in Thailand during the years 1932, 1933, and 1935. Though the overseas Chinese played only an insignificant part in the turmoil, the resultant governments had a direct and far-reaching impact upon these people through the so-called Thai-ification program. The status of the Thai was to be raised as distinguished from aliens in the country. The indigenous people were to receive a higher degree of education, and they were to be placed in control of industry, commerce, and agriculture. The greatest burden was to fall on the Chinese population, for they controlled 95 percent of the economy in the hands of aliens. In a series of events the Government seized many businesses to run as a Government monopoly and enacted legislation prohibiting alien operation in others. Alien and business taxes were instituted which fell chiefly on the Chinese. By 1940 more than 30 percent of the Chinese schools had been closed, 10 of the 11 Chinese newspapers were inoperative, and arrests of aliens

were commonplace. Finally, by legislative fiat, immigration was brought to a standstill.¹⁹ Skinner, a foremost authority on the overseas Chinese, feels that the motive of the Thai Government was directly aimed at encouraging assimilation and the loosening of an alien grip on the economy.²⁰

The Chinese, never content with the status quo and constantly seeking solution to their problems, reasoned that the taxes, laws, and regulations were directed at aliens. In order to save their positions they sought citizenship, but the Government reacted by making naturalization more difficult through the requirement of testing in the written and spoken Thai language. Some Chinese formed new companies with Thai citizens as ostensible owners. Illicit immigration was attempted, but by 1938 the number of Chinese entering the country was less than the number leaving.²¹

At this point it must be noted that the regulation of schools, the imposition of taxes, the discrimination relative to engagement in certain businesses applied to all aliens alike but was interpreted by the Chinese to be aimed at them.²² In fact, the regulations rarely named the Chinese specifically but enforcement against any other group was negligible.²³

In 1937 the Japanese Army invaded China. The Thai Government maintained a position of neutrality and enacted legislation in consonance with that stand. The overseas Chinese, motivated by their feeling for their motherland, further alienated themselves from the Thais by propagandizing for China, by collecting war chests which were forwarded to the homeland, and by imposing a boycott on Japanese goods.²⁴

With World War II relations between the Thais and the expatriate Chinese were stretched to the breaking point. In 1941 Thailand joined Japan and de-

clared war on the United States and Great Britain. China was an ally of both countries and therefore the nationalism of overseas Chinese was diametrically opposed to the policies of the Thai Government. To counter any move the alien population might make and to further control their actions, Thailand imposed broad restrictions in addition to those already in effect. The Chinese were prohibited from purchasing real estate, additional businesses were proscribed, and certain cities and designated areas were placed off limits.²⁵

With the termination of hostilities in 1945, the Chinese attempted a victory celebration which led to a clash between the Chinese on the one hand and the Thai troops and police on the other. A number of Chinese were killed before Government officials could intervene.²⁶ Relations between the two people deteriorated to an alltime low, and Chinese nationalism rose to an alltime high.

III—POST—WORLD WAR II

In 1946, with the war over and memory of the victory tragedy still clear, Thailand relaxed some of the restrictions it had earlier placed on the overseas Chinese. The first treaty ever concluded with China, the Treaty of Amity of 1946, provided for diplomatic exchange and reciprocity in relation to trade, travel, and education. Though the treaty assured freedom of educational choice for the Chinese in Thailand, it had little practical effect, for Chinese was still taught only as an additional language.¹ The overseas people were permitted to return to and live in cities and areas from which they had been formerly excluded. Restrictions concerning participation in certain businesses and trades were removed, and Chinese schools were permitted to operate on a larger scale but with Chinese language and optional subject only.² Finally, immigration from China

was renewed and in short order became what was termed by many an invasion.³

A coup occurred in 1947 which was followed by another in 1951. Though assurances were given to the Chinese population by each, governmental policy continued to be directed against the Chinese schools and especially the Chinese language. A relatively minor incident reveals the orientation of the overseas people during this period and partially sets the stage for future events. The Chinese schools commenced flying the Chinese flag over their buildings, to which the Thais objected. The question was finally settled in favor of Thailand, but only after a great deal of rancor and bitterness, and subsequent to negotiation with China under the Treaty of Amity.⁴

Alarmed over the flood of new immigrants fleeing events in China and entering Thailand, and concerned with the militant nationalism of the Chinese, the Thai Government enacted legislation restricting immigration from China to 10,000 annually in 1947 and drastically cut the number to 200 in 1949. Despite the establishment of elaborate control posts and special police units trained for the purpose of immigration regulation, many Chinese illegally entered the country. The majority, however, were caught, jailed, heavily fined, and deported. Coupled with a small voluntary exodus of several hundred Chinese in the years 1950 and 1951, the governmental policy effectively prevented the entry of any significant quantity of new blood.⁵

As the Communists won victories and eventually established their government in Peking on 1 October 1949, the number of overseas Chinese in Thailand who were Communists or supporters increased. Once more the expatriates could see a Chinese central government emerging to which they could direct their loyalties and nationalistic feeling.⁶ However, with the takeover of the Mainland by the Communists and the

establishment of the Nationalists in Taiwan, the Chinese in Thailand were faced with an open split within their own community. A feud developed between the two factions, each controlling a newspaper which was used to fan the flames of conflict and hatred.⁷ The Thai Government reacted with a full-scale policy of containment against the Chinese in general and the Communist conspiracy in particular. In effect, the restrictions and controls took the same form as those of the 1930's. Economic sanctions were placed on the aliens, economic assistance was granted to Thais, the state increased its role in industry, and indigenous nationals were encouraged to enter the fields of commerce and finance.⁸ Additionally, alien taxes were levied and raids on the alien community were increased in an effort to prevent subversion. Skinner feels that these policies were, at first, directed against the Chinese per se but that later they took an anti-Communist orientation.⁹ Perhaps the extent of this redirection and the Thai concern with communism can be interpreted when consideration is given to Thailand's entry shortly thereafter in the Korean war on the side of the United Nations.¹⁰

Recognizing the impact of the Chinese schools on the alien sector as well as the schools' vulnerability to Communist subversion, Thailand again declared war on this subject. It took the form of three major battles cleansing the schools of political influence, imposition of a Thai staff and Thai curriculum, and limitation of the financial base of the system. Teachers were screened as to loyalty and thought; Chinese language training was severely curtailed; books were censored, blacklisted, or banned; Thai principals were appointed; and Government subsidies were granted to cooperating schools. "The net result of the Ministry of Education's policies was disastrous to the cause of Chinese

education."¹¹

To combat this Thai-ification program, Chinese businesses resorted to an extremely unorthodox tactic which had been partially successful 20 years earlier. The Chinese allied themselves economically with Thai businessmen by reorganizing their enterprises to take advantage of the skills and experiences of both and the protection and immunity offered by the Thais. The two groups found the arrangement to their mutual satisfaction and, though not leading directly to assimilation, the alliance prevented additional friction and hardship which could have slowed or reversed any assimilation occurring at the time.¹²

In reviewing this period a Soviet scholar termed the renewal of the Thai-ification program a "concerted effort to persecute the Chinese" through mass arrests, raids on schools and businesses, incarceration in concentration camps, and deportation without trial.¹³ It was motivated, he contended, by a general imperialist campaign against the Chinese Peoples Republic in general and the Chinese bourgeoisie in particular.¹⁴ It was a direct consequence of adherence by Thailand to American Far Eastern policy; an adherence bought with U.S. economic and military aid and was "subservient to American dictate."¹⁵

After consolidation of its gains on the Mainland, Communist China attempted to influence the overseas Chinese in Thailand in an effort to obtain their support and loyalty. Education on the Mainland was sponsored for those interested, but it proved a failure. Many returnees were refused readmission to Thailand on the ground they would be subversive agents for communism due, in part, to the political indoctrination they had received. In addition, it was felt by the Thai Government that their new skills would tend to give them an advantage over the Thai, a

reflection of Thai nationalism. Many refused to go due to they were segregated in China for being "unreliable." Others condemned the drabness of life in Communist China or pointed to unfulfilled promises on the part of that Government such as education in a trade rather than in the promised profession.¹⁶

Gradually, even the bulk of those supporting Peking became disillusioned. Through revolutionary policies, land reform, and particularly antifamily programs, the overseas people became disenchanted with the Communists. "The expropriation of landlords and rich peasants, the fines and reeducation programs instituted against these groups and most recently the development of communes have struck at the traditional modes of allegiance of overseas Chinese for their homeland."¹⁷ That the overseas Chinese have taken cognizance of these harsh and arbitrary measures can be readily seen by the drastic shrinkage of remittances to Mainland China and a general orientation toward Taipei.¹⁸

The Russian view of Peking's accomplishments was that China was rapidly and continuously providing improvement of the lot of all Chinese and "that means that the hopeless poverty and hunger which had forced hundreds of thousands of Chinese peasants and artisans to abandon their native land in search of happiness in overseas countries have receded into the irretrievable past."¹⁹ Thus is predicted the end of the flow of new blood to the overseas areas.

Finally, Simoniia points to Peking's acceptance of the right of the individual to establish citizenship in another nation with the concomitant redirection of loyalty as being compatible with the Communist goal of "serving the cause of peaceful coexistence and meeting the vital national requirements of the Southeast Asian countries."²⁰ In essence, then, he implies that one may become completely assimilated without

fear of conflicting loyalties.

With the Thai Government firmly committed to a policy of anticomunism and with the loss of image in the world by Peking due to Korea and the persecution of families on the Mainland, the overseas Chinese in Thailand turned toward the Nationalist Chinese Government on Taiwan. The initial, tentative reorientation was reinforced by a concerted effort on the part of Taipei to attract the loyalties of the expatriates.²¹ University education was offered the overseas Chinese people which provided classical scholarship, scientific studies, and traditional endeavors. This education was relatively free of political indoctrination, which was prevalent on the Mainland, and equipped the individual, upon return to Thailand, to climb the social ladder more easily and bridge the gap between peoples.²² Due to the size of Taiwan, however, its limited facilities, and a burgeoning population, few vacancies occurred in the schools which resulted in relatively few Thai Chinese receiving an education there.²³

As a result of the discrediting of Peking, the only possible place to which the overseas Chinese may look for "home" is Taipei. Yet there is no true enthusiasm for the Nationalists either, for there is no real expectation of a return to the Mainland, which is really the motherland. Rather than supporting Taipei, it could better be said that the overseas Chinese to some degree opposed communism and the Peking regime.²⁴ In fact, shifting events nationally and internationally have, since 1955, caused the Chinese in Thailand to shift allegiance back and forth depending upon which way the wind seems to be blowing. Actually there appears little support for either side.²⁵ Should such be the case, assimilation could prove much easier and perhaps the best avenue for all.

In 1955 Thailand, recognizing that the Thai Chinese could go to neither

Taiwan nor Red China, attempted a rapprochement by repudiating its policies of containment. On the positive side it embarked upon a program with the goal of granting rights "as nearly equal to those of Thai nationals as possible to encourage Chinese assimilation."²⁶ Thai language fluency for naturalization was dropped, all were encouraged to seek naturalization, the Military Service Act was changed permitting Chinese to serve in the Armed Forces, the immigration fee was lowered, all born in Thailand were declared citizens, and educational requirements for citizenship were dropped.

Several reasons were at the heart of this change in policy. Premier Phibun had just returned from an extended around-the-world trip where he had seen democracy in action, and he sought wide public support. The French Indochinese War had been terminated and with it the last vestiges of colonialism departed Southeast Asia. Thailand was not faced with the prospect of a war. The Spirit of Bandung tended to assure the Thais in respect to militant communism. Through the medium of the SEATO Treaty, Thailand had achieved a sense of security which made a Chinese fifth column less likely. And, finally, there was a great deal of local disgust with the excesses of the Thai-ification program. The only policy that appeared to offer success was an attempt to assimilate and integrate the local Chinese into Thai society.²⁷

In the 1960's Taipei has generally followed Peking on matters of citizenship and repatriation in acknowledging that man has the right to change his nationality. Taipei had been reluctant but has inexorably come toward this view. The Nationalists have not favored repatriation to Taiwan and, indeed, have argued that there is no room on the Island for them. Peking, on the other hand, accepts repatriates, but turmoil on the Mainland mitigates against it. In

addition, returnees are often settled in places in China unknown to them or their ancestors, and the repatriates are required to conform to a life that is alien to them. Clearly, repatriation to the Mainland has proven a painful accommodation.²⁸

Skinner feels that, since the turn of the century, the overseas Chinese have become much less sharply distinguished from the larger Thai group, and he attributes this fact to governmental policy which was aimed directly, in the long run, to eradication of the distinction between the two peoples.²⁹

IV—PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE ASSIMILATION

Though the Government of Thailand has relaxed many of its harsh and arbitrary policies in relation to the overseas Chinese within its territorial jurisdiction, two continue to remain in effect and promise to remain so. It is instructive to note that these remaining restrictions strike at the heart of the problem of assimilation and are most important toward the achievement of one people within the unitary state. Since 1949 only a trickle of new Chinese immigrants are permitted to enter Thailand legally, and though some additional individuals surreptitiously make their way across the border, the nation's police patrols are becoming more efficient. The end result is that relatively little new blood is infused into the local Chinese community. In addition, unremitting pressure has been kept on Chinese education and the teaching or use of the Chinese language within the school system. The importance of these policies of rigidly controlled immigration and severely restricted Chinese education to the assimilation of the overseas Chinese in Thailand cannot be overstressed.¹

The result of governmental policy to "encourage" assimilation "forced or otherwise" has been relatively success-

ful.² Business and social contacts between the two ethnic groups have increased substantially; Chinese children attend Thai or mission schools and use the vernacular tongue with little friction or complaint; interracial marriage, included at all levels of society, is occurring more frequently; and joint clubs and organizations have been established with a great deal of success. "It is significant that more Chinese have been assimilated into Thai society than in any other non-Chinese country."³

Though the goal of assimilation is slowly being met, factors beyond the control of Thailand have an impact upon the situation. Purcell, in supporting the proposition of current assimilation, noted that it could proceed more rapidly when he said, "The main obstacle to the finding of a *modus vivendi* between the overseas Chinese and the other races was the continuance of the Cold War. If the artificial alignment of humanity consequent upon this could be removed, it was likely that the presence of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia would become increasingly less a problem."⁴

Communist China, for the most part, has all but written the overseas people off. At Bandung, in 1955, she recognized the right of these individuals to choose their own nationality and to plan their own destiny. At best they see the overseas Chinese as often embarrassing and expendable.⁵ They tend to be a nuisance complicating international strategy and relations with other nations.

On the other hand, Taiwan lacks the ability to engender respect among the statesmen of Southeast Asia and within the Chinese community.⁶ The chances of return to the homeland are remote, international prestige is low, and even the position of great power status on the Security Council of the United Nations is increasingly under attack.

Thus the overseas Chinese are effectively isolated from both Peking and

Taipei. Few or no immigrants arrive from either, and few expatriates depart Thailand for resettlement. The educational system is cut off from China due to a quarter century of turmoil in both Thailand and China. Thai Chinese students can't go to Mainland China and hope to return to Thailand while Taiwan China can accept only a token number. Thai hostility to Chinese education in general and the importation of Chinese teachers in particular has forced reliance on products of the overseas schools, and these teachers are poorly trained in the Chinese language due to prohibition of its use in the classroom.⁷ The overseas people have little choice but to turn to the culture of their adopted country and become a part of it.

It would be naive to believe, however, that complete assimilation has no obstacles. In effect, there are two foes that mitigate against total assimilation in Thailand, and these must be reckoned with.⁸ The first is an attack from the right which includes the traditional Chinese community leaders and the old school Taiwan diplomats. This small minority is living in the past and is reluctant to see nationalism, on the part of the overseas people, dissipate. The selfish motive of loss of individual prestige is an additional ingredient of their dissatisfaction with the change presently evolving. Distressing to them is the thought of eventual disappearance of the Chinese community which could lend comfort, hope, and prestige to an ultimate Nationalist return to Mainland China and a rebirth of Kuomintang Chinese greatness.⁹

The second major foe attacks from the left and is perhaps the most dangerous. He is the young Chinese striving for a sense of purpose. He is idealistic and is willing to face danger and privation in an effort to provide his answers to social and political problems. He too strives for nationalism, but one oriented toward Peking and the militant charac-

ter of the Mao brand of communism.¹⁰ How many Chinese are involved in the terrorism and guerrilla activities in the northeast part of Thailand is unknown, but it is presumed to be small.¹¹ The bulk of these insurgents appears to be North Vietnamese with a minor following of Thai Laotians.

Further complicating the picture is the indigenous Thai who wishes to maintain the Chinese community as a source of illicit revenue and as a scapegoat for governmental policy failure.

But, be that as it may, the Government of Thailand seems to be in the driver's seat. Various policies over the years have been attempted, and, after trial and error, the promising ones are retained; those inappropriate are discarded. The prime goal is assimilation of the overseas Chinese peoples, and this has been increasingly successful. Not only have immigration policies and education dictates contributed, but even repressive measures have led to some Chinese identifying with Thailand to the extent of adopting Thai names.¹²

Few barriers to assimilation remain. The religious background of the two peoples offers no antagonism. Miscegenation has occurred since the first Chinese arrived and has been remarkably successful due to the physical similarity of the two peoples. The current situation was clearly explained by Mr. Puey Ungphakorn, Governor of the Bank of Thailand, when he recently said:

Speaking for those who are, like myself, partly Chinese, I should say first that we have never been to China. We don't know Chinese. We owe our allegiance to Thailand . . . It would perhaps be safe to say that some are still taught to look to China at least as their father if not in fact their mother country. However, both Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese Communists claim their allegiance. One good thing about the Chinese Communist regime is that many of the Chinese aliens in Thailand are no longer really alien. The wealthy Chinese especially dare not leave Thailand at the present time to

visit China for fear of not being able to return. This makes the process of assimilation much easier.¹³

Perhaps it is also one of the minor reasons that Thailand refuses to recognize the Peking regime. And this lack of recognition in itself tends to militate against any association of the overseas people and Peking.

The United States, with a major interest in the Far East, and in Thailand especially, can help its SEATO Ally to achieve its goal of assimilation of the overseas Chinese. Indeed, it is in the best interest of this nation to do so for the strength of any friend or foe is directly proportional to its stability and viability as a nation. But the American effort must be both subtle and sophisticated to prevent the charge of interference and to allay any suspicion on the part of Chinese, both overseas and in Taipei, as well as a feeling of annoyance on the part of the Thai.¹⁴ Briefly, the United States could mount a diplomatic offensive in Thailand and Taiwan with the goal of assimilation. Loans on special terms could be made available to biracial businesses in Thailand. Economic, military, and technical assistance could be tailored toward the end of

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interracial cooperation. Education could be provided in the United States for young Thai and overseas Chinese alike which would equip the individual not only in a trade, or a profession, but also in the social sciences and humanities. Textbooks could be provided which generate and support national, as opposed to parochial, loyalty. Officers of the Thai Armed Forces, without regard to race, could be both educated and trained for service to country. The U.S. Information Service could provide meaningful programs within the country that would tend toward national unity. The Peace Corps program could be

expanded with highly trained, knowledgeable teachers at its center with the aim of teaching and stimulating national solidarity.

At present Thailand seems to have been eminently successful in its program to integrate the overseas Chinese into Thai society. Indeed, by the third generation, as proposed by Skinner, Williams, and Purcell, the overseas Chinese are integrated into the larger body politic. It is conceivable that, should progress continue at the rate achieved since the end of World War II, in the not too distant future the overseas Chinese in Thailand may cease to exist.

FOOTNOTES

INTRODUCTION

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3. Williams, p. 3; W.E. Willmott, "The Chinese in Southeast Asia," *Australian Outlook*, December 1966, p. 261.
4. G. William Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1957), p. 299-300; John F. Cady, *Thailand, Burma, Laos, & Cambodia* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 114-115.
5. Wendell Blanchard, *Thailand: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture* (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1958), p. 56.
6. Williams, p. 27.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

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2. Williams, p. 11.
3. Virginia M. Thompson and Richard Adloff, *Minority Problems in Southeast Asia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1955), p. 44-45.
4. Skinner, p. 30-32.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
6. Purcell, p. 92-93; Skinner, p. 26-27, 134.
7. Purcell, p. 115; Skinner, p. 3.
8. Skinner, p. 11.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 15-16.
10. Purcell, p. 98-99.

II—THE RISE OF CHINESE NATIONALISM

1. Williams, p. 13.
2. Purcell, p. 115-116; Skinner, p. 155, 159.
3. Purcell, p. 119-120; Skinner, p. 159-165.
4. Purcell, p. 295-296.
5. Skinner, p. 159-161.
6. Blanchard, p. 67.
7. Williams, p. 45-46; Skinner, p. 227-232.

8. Williams, p. 32, 102.
9. Williams, p. 102; Skinner, p. 232-233.
10. Purecell, p. 37, 142-143.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
12. Thompson and Adloff, p. 48.
13. Skinner, p. 126, 190.
14. Kenneth P. Landon, *The Chinese in Thailand* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 204.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 205-214.
16. Williams, p. 74.
17. Landon, p. 213.
18. Skinner, p. 246-247.
19. Purecell, p. 134-135, 137; Skinner, p. 219-222, 266-267.
20. Skinner, p. 249; Eliezer B. Ayal, "Private Enterprise and Economic Progress in Thailand," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, November 1966, p. 11.
21. Purecell, p. 136, 140.
22. Skinner, p. 228, 264.
23. Blanchard, p. 67.
24. Skinner, p. 243.
25. Purecell, p. 147-148.
26. Skinner, p. 274-276.

III—POST-WORLD WAR II

1. Purecell, p. 148, 151.
2. Skinner, p. 285-287.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 283.
4. Purecell, p. 156.
5. Thompson and Adloff, p. 45; Ayal, p. 10.
6. Skinner, p. 322-324.
7. Purecell, p. 160-161.
8. Skinner, p. 354.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 325-328.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 327.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 370.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 360-362.
13. N.A. Simoniia, *Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia; a Russian Study* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, Dept. of Far Eastern Studies, Southeast Asia Program, 1961), p. 85.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 83; Justus M. van der Kroef, "Thailand between Two Millstones," *Contemporary Review*, July 1966, p. 21.
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17. David A. Wilson, *China, Thailand and the Spirit of Bandung* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, 1962), p. 50.
18. Thompson and Adloff, p. 46; Skinner, p. 328.
19. Simoniia, p. 109.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
21. Skinner, p. 335-338.
22. Williams, p. 56.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
24. Skinner, p. 340.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 343-344; Willmott, p. 261-262.
26. Skinner, p. 377-378; Ayal, p. 6.
27. Skinner, p. 379-380.
28. Williams, p. 67.
29. Skinner, p. 298-300.

IV—PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE ASSIMILATION

1. Skinner, p. 381; John Audric, "Thailand Today," *Contemporary Review*, July 1966, p. 26.

2. Blanchard, p. 68.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 69; Donald E. Neuchterlein, "Thailand: Another Viet Nam?" *Asian Survey*, February 1967, p. 126.
4. Purell, p. 568.
5. Williams, p. 65.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
9. Wilson, p. 50-51.
10. Williams, p. 109.
11. Frances L. Starner, "Troubled Triangle," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 22 June 1967, p. 661; Van der Kroef, p. 22.
12. Purell, p. 164-165; Ayal, p. 10.
13. Alexandra Close, "Interview with Mr. Puey Ungphakorn, Governor of the Bank of Thailand," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 20 May 1965, p. 356.
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